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**State Fire Marshal and NFPA Urge the Public to  
“Be Smart! Leave the Fireworks to the Pros”**

State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan and National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) President James M. Shannon today hosted a press conference with members of the medical, fire and law enforcement communities to raise awareness of the dangers of consumer fireworks. These participants are working together to encourage the public to “Be smart! Leave the fireworks to the professionals,” and to enjoy a safe and happy July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday.

Coan said, “Don’t be fooled by deceptive advertising. There is no such thing as a safe or sane firework no matter how pretty or patriotic the packaging or marketing campaign. Yet the industry continues to encourage untrained adults and children to handle unpredictable explosives that can be set off by heat, shock or friction.”

“There is simply no safe way to use consumer fireworks,” said James M. Shannon, president of NFPA, a founding member of the Alliance to Stop Consumer Fireworks. “People should leave fireworks to the professionals and celebrate our nation’s birthday by enjoying professional displays put on by trained individuals.” NFPA announced the release of two new video PSAs available denouncing the use of consumer fireworks. They can be viewed at [www.nfpa.org/fireworks](http://www.nfpa.org/fireworks).

**Medical, Fire and Law Enforcement Officials Unite**

They were joined by Jeff Schaff R.N., the Trauma Program Manager at Baystate Medical Center, Ware Fire Chief Thomas Coloumbe representing the Fire Chiefs’ Association of Massachusetts, Magda Rodriguez, coordinator for the SAFE Kids of Western Massachusetts headquartered at Baystate Children’s Hospital, FPO Michael Swain, secretary of the Fire Prevention Association of Massachusetts and Campus Fire Prevention Officer at the University of Massachusetts @ Amherst, area fire chiefs, code enforcement officials from the Department of Fire Services and members of the State Police Bomb Squad who conducted the demonstration.

*Administrative Services • Hazardous Materials Response*  
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**Fireworks Send Over 3,000 children under 14 to Emergency Rooms Each Year**

“It can be difficult for us in trauma and emergency medicine to enjoy a holiday like the Fourth because it usually means children and adults will present to our facility with a variety of serious injuries from the illegal use of fireworks,” says Jeff Schaff, RN, trauma-program manager at Baystate Medical Center in Springfield, western Massachusetts’ only Level 1 trauma center. “Whether it’s a burn, an eye injury, or something as traumatic as an amputation, it is heartbreaking to see anyone have his or her life permanently affected by an injury from fireworks, which can bring such a thrill when they’re handled safely by professionals. I hope parents, their children and everyone in the community takes this message to heart, and we have a safe Fourth this year.”

**4<sup>th</sup> of July No Holiday for Firefighters**

Ware Fire Chief Thomas Coloumbe, representing the Fire Chiefs’ Association of Massachusetts said, “Traditionally, the Fourth of July has been one of the busiest days of the year for firefighters who, in many communities, provide both emergency medical services as well as fire suppression.” He added, “The illegal use of fireworks by amateurs, bon fires, backyard barbecues gone haywire, lawnmowers refueled while the engine is still hot, and overheating cars mean that the Fourth of July is no holiday for firefighters.”

**Set a Good Example**

Michael J. Swain, secretary of the Fire Prevention Association of Massachusetts said, “Prevention of fireworks injuries starts when responsible adults set a good example and leave the fireworks to the professionals.” He added, “Children and teenagers know where adults keep the fireworks, and when they see adults use them without injury, wrongly believe then can too.”

**Fireworks Are Not Toys**

“Don’t let kids play with fireworks, period,” said Magda Rodriguez, SAFE Kids of Western Massachusetts coordinator. “Fireworks, including sparklers and flares, can cause serious burns as well as blast injuries that can permanently impair vision and hearing. The safest way to enjoy fireworks is to watch them at a community event where professionals handle them, and even then, keep kids under constant supervision - in sight and within reach at all times.”

**Fireworks Are Illegal Except for Licensed Professionals**

Coan said, “The possession and use of all fireworks by private citizens is illegal in Massachusetts. This includes Class C fireworks, which are sometimes falsely called ‘safe and sane.’ Examples of these are sparklers, party poppers, snappers, firecrackers, and spinners.” He noted that the teens involved in firesetting and bomb making frequently use the contents of class C fireworks to build their explosive devices.

**Illegal to Bring Fireworks into Massachusetts from Out-of-State**

It is illegal to purchase fireworks in another state such as New Hampshire or Connecticut, and to then transport them into Massachusetts. Advertisers cannot be prohibited from advertising fireworks, but it is illegal to purchase fireworks through catalogues or over the Internet for delivery in this state. Many unhappy consumers have lost both their money and

fireworks trying to circumvent the law. State Fire Marshal Coan said, “Play it safe and enjoy the many professional, supervised displays across the state this holiday week!”

**Fireworks Caused Over \$1.5 Million in Losses in Past Decade**

In the past decade (1998-2007) Massachusetts has experienced 677 major fires and explosions from fireworks causing one death, 15 civilian injuries, nine fire service injuries and nearly \$1.5 million in property loss — all in a state where consumer fireworks are illegal. A majority of these incidents took place during the week of the Fourth of July holiday.

**1/3 of Fireworks Burn Injuries to Children 10-14**

Over the same period, the state’s burn registry reported 42 people were treated at Massachusetts emergency rooms for severe burn injuries from fireworks – burns covering 5% or more of the body. Nearly 70% of these victims were people under age 18 and one-third were between 10 and 14 years old. During the last 10 years the oldest reported person injured by fireworks was a 47-year old man and the youngest was a little boy less than one-year old.

**Demonstration of Danger**

Just how lethal fireworks can be, was shown in a startling demonstration conducted by the State Police Bomb Squad assigned to the Office of the State Fire Marshal. Fireworks, typical of those confiscated by law enforcement authorities, were attached to mannequins. The damage done was shocking as spectators were asked to imagine how much worse the damage would be to a child’s body. Also shown, was how quickly a sparkler can ignite the sleeve of children’s clothing, and the damage aerial fireworks can do when their flight path encounters a human face and eyes.